

Mayor's Column for April 29, 2009 Review

Flu Information

A Public Health Emergency has been declared by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a precautionary measure because of a global outbreak of swine flu. As I am writing this column, there are no reported cases of swine flu in Wisconsin. Here is basic information about swine flu:

- This year's flu vaccine does not protect you from swine flu.
- Proper basic hygiene is the best protection against swine flu. Cover your mouth when coughing/sneezing. Wash hands frequently and thoroughly. Infection enters the body through the nose and mouth.
- Swine flu is a respiratory illness. The most common symptoms are high fever, sore throat, cough, and body aches. If you experience symptoms, contact your doctor as soon as possible. There is medication that is most effective when obtained early in the course of the illness.
- If you feel ill, stay home to avoid spreading the illness.

Mayor's Calendar

As I thought about organizing the information I wanted to share with you this week, I was having difficulty connecting the material for the article. Actually, the mayor's calendar is the common thread running through this column. What follows is a summary of my participation in the people's business the last two weeks.

I attended three regularly scheduled City Hall meetings. We have monthly department head, technical staff and office staff meetings that provide a venue for flow of information, clarification of projects and procedures, and discussion of and suggestions for operational improvements. Each meeting is typically around an hour in length. City Hall is committed to serving the needs of our citizens in an open, professional manner. We continue to consider possible service improvements. This week many City employees are participating in refresher courses on emergency resuscitation procedures. In early May, I will be attending a day-long seminar at UW-Madison on Customer Satisfaction Measures in Local Government.

Common Council meetings were held on April 14 and 21. Sheriff Spoden addressed the Council on the explosion of heroin usage in Rock County. The Sheriff is using public awareness and education as one line of defense in tackling this serious problem. Plans for renovating the old fire station to accommodate the police department were discussed. To make committee appointments prior to the April 21 re-organizational meeting, I spent several hours contacting citizens and alders to request their service during the coming year. I am grateful to everyone making commitments of their time and talents to serve our community. I have a few contacts remaining to complete this annual mayoral task.

First quarter 2009 results of city expenditures became available. Keeping in mind that many expenses are seasonal in nature, actual expenses are at 21% of the yearly budget.

To focus on best budgeting efforts going forward, we are arranging to have the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance review our budget and expenditures and make suggestions for improvement. We have a presentation by the Alliance tentatively scheduled for June. This will be a timely program as we begin drafting a challenging 2010 budget mid-summer.

A working group of representatives from the City, Chamber of Commerce, School District, and Evansville Community Partnership met last week to continue efforts to determine the economic development structure identified as a priority in the Evansville Economic Development Plan completed last summer. Rock County Economic Development Manager James Otterstein has facilitated a number of monthly work sessions that identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and resources of current organizations as they relate to our community's economic development needs. At the meeting held last week, a decision was reached that in the current economic climate no single local organization has the resources to undertake all economic development activities in Evansville. There was an acknowledgement that an outcome of last year's economic summit was a determination that "status quo" efforts were not adequate. To move forward, consensus was reached that an umbrella "alliance" will be formed to enhance the collaboration among all organizations involved in economic development and promotional activities in Evansville, reduce the duplication of efforts/activities of the various member groups, and maximize the utilization of the scarce economic development and promotional dollars available. There will be a final facilitated meeting of this work group in May to establish the framework for the umbrella "alliance". An organizational chart will be developed and an initial plan of action drafted to launch the "alliance".

I attended the City Economic Development Committee meeting last week. The Committee finalized the design of new "Welcome to Evansville" signs that will be located at entrances to our community. Gene Bass led a small working group, with participants from the Chamber, Park Board and Historic Preservation Commission, in determining sign project details in a timely manner; they are to be commended for moving this project quickly with terrific results. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation approved construction of the new signs with funds remaining from our Main Street reconstruction enhancement grant. Also approved for purchase with remaining grant funds were additional banners for the new downtown light poles and decorative lights for the Main Street bridge over Allen Creek. The Committee also made decisions on flower basket details that will work long-term on the downtown light poles. A status report was given on the economic development "alliance" working group progress described above.

WPPI Energy held a meeting of their Executive Committee in Evansville last week. With assets over one-half billion dollars, WPPI Energy is owned by member communities, including Evansville. The Executive Committee meets in member communities 3-4 times each year and usually tours a large customer of the host utility. The group toured Larson Acres. Multiple attendees indicated that the Larson Acre tour

was the best business tour they had participated in. They were unaware of the extensive use of technology on the farm.

The actual WPPI Energy Executive Committee meeting was about five hours in length. Union Bank and Trust generously hosted the meeting of about twenty-five attendees. There was review of monthly financial reports and discussion and approval of the 2009 load forecast. Because of current economic conditions the forecast included a reduction of 4%. There were updates on the U.S. House proposed climate change legislation and State energy bill. There was extended discussion of staff analysis of best joint action agency stimulus fund opportunities. WPPI Energy is focusing on applications for low income weatherization funds, LED street light upgrades and smart-grid demonstration projects. Member communities can decide whether to participate individually in successful joint program awards.

Last Friday, the Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence Legislative Committee met in Evansville. The agenda was focused on energy education and outreach. The School District hosted the meeting in the District Office conference room. Evansville was selected to host this meeting because it coincided with the Energy Fair. I asked Heidi Carvin to discuss energy/environmental education and curriculum initiatives in the School District. The attendees were interested in Heidi's information on the Wisconsin Science Literacy Project with its initial focus on biotechnology and nanotechnology. Evansville has been selected as one of the pilot school districts in the Project. She described the SciFusion Learning Portal that is under development. Updated information was provided on energy-related stimulus funding opportunities. Helen Forbeck, Field Representative for Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, attended and provided an update on the meetings on the proposed House energy legislation. The meeting adjourned to the Energy Fair. The Energy Fair was great and was extremely well-attended. Over the years, the Fair has provided family-oriented, educational fun for our citizens.

I spent time organizing and preparing for the WPPI Energy and Office of Energy Independence meetings in Evansville. On behalf of our community, I would like to thank Larson Acres, Union Bank and Trust Company, and the School District for their assistance and efforts in facilitating these meetings.

Data collection of municipal energy usage in City buildings, vehicles and street lighting was completed and submitted to the Energy Center of Wisconsin. The data will be used to calculate baseline energy usage by our municipal services. The baseline information should be available later this week; the Energy Independence Team can then begin to build a plan of conservation, energy efficiency and increased use of renewables.

I attended Week of the Young Child festivities at the School District Fieldhouse and a Madison fundraiser for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. I also wrote the bi-weekly mayor's column. The drafting, fact-checking, and editing ordinarily takes 4-5 hours.

As do all City employees, I complete time records. I logged 93.5 hours the past two weeks. Our City Administrator routinely works 90+ hours bi-weekly. Some of our activities overlap, however, most of the time we work on different matters. We consult, inform and update each other at least once a day. Some weeks are not as filled with activity, but City Hall is usually a busy place. The snapshot I have given is intended to provide a window to my work as your mayor.

Energy Saving Tip

Toaster ovens, slow cookers, and microwaves can use up to 75% less energy than an electric oven. Use smaller kitchen appliances when available.

Community Announcements

A public open house to take comments and answer questions about the draft Rock County Comprehensive Plan – 2035 will be held on Thursday, April 30, 2009, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Rock County Courthouse Conference Center, Room 250, in Janesville. The draft plan can be viewed on the Rock County website.

Darcy Luoma, Regional Representative for Senator Herb Kohl, will meet with interested constituents on Monday, May 4, 2009, from 11:00 a.m. to Noon, at Eager Free Public Library.

Community Congratulations/Thanks

Evansville thanks the many businesses and volunteers who supported the wonderful activities of the Week of the Young Child. Julie Hermanson of AWARE deserves special recognition for coordinating the Week's events.

Congratulations to proprietors Ayn Steinlein and Ann Sellnow on the opening of a new downtown business, The Grooming Room, located at 5 Maple Street.

Kudos to the dozens of teachers, students and community volunteers who spent hundreds of hours in planning the Energy Fair. Special thanks are extended to Butch Beedle and Robin Grignon for once again making a special community happening.